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AUTHOR McElhinney, James H.
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ABSTRACT

This brief paper on work-related criticism begins by describing the school learning area, which is composed of social and work relationships. It discusses criticism and the importance of constructive criticism that is work related. An outline then lists practices that are advocated regarding work-related criticism. The first major section of the outline concerns steps and recommendations for teacher criticism of the learner in work situations. The second major section focuses on teaching a learner to be his/her own critic. It is divided into two subsections, the first of which details appropriate situations (where a learner creates a product or masters a new competency). The second subsection makes recommendations for teaching practices designed to teach the learner to criticize himself/herself. (YLB)

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CRITICISM AND LEARNING

James H. McElhinney
Ball State University

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A school learning area is a blend of social relationships and work relationships. Good social relationships create pleasant interpersonal transactions and may lead to healthy friendships. Good work relationships stimulate on-task behaviors, increased individual and group competencies and lead to the production of valuable products.

Productive work relationships require inputs and responses that are obviously or subtly different from social relationships. As teachers and learners, we have received little help in mastering the nuances that distinguish between social and work related transactions.

Criticism is an important contributor as learners move toward increased competence. Our informal socialization leads us to conclude that criticism is often intended to be destructive. With this social orientation, often we have learned to respond defensively. The purpose of this series of activities is to become more competent at constructive criticism in work situations.

As learners, each of us needs constructive criticism. As learners, each of us needs to learn to receive and respond constructively to criticism. As teachers, each of us must become skilled at giving criticism in ways that it is received constructively.

Early and continuously, help learners to distinguish between criticism that is largely social and criticism that is work related. Social criticism if often directed toward grooming, courtesy, or interpersonal sensitivity. Work related criticism includes the application of criteria for quality to a product or a performance. The following practices are advocated regarding work related criticism.

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I. TEACHER CRITICISM OF LEARNER IN WORK SITUATIONS

A. Establish the expectation that work related criticism is always intended to be helpful.

B. Make criticism specific to the competencies currently being developed.

C. Provide the criticism as soon as possible.

1. Reduce the time the learner holds an erroneous concept.

2. Reduce the number of times the learner will practice the error.

D. Accurately describe the situation needing attention, then examine alternatives with the learner.

E. Provide needed help. Usually we would have already performed better if we knew how!

F. Examine with the learner the "what" and (where important) "why".

G. Close with statement of confidence in the learner's subsequent success.

H. Follow-up later with deserved compliment.

I. Teach learner to acknowledge and compliment the giver of constructive criticism.

II. TEACHING A LEARNER TO BE HIS/HER OWN CRITIC

A. Appropriate where learner creates a product or masters new competency.

1. Use where:

a. a response includes judgment and skill.

b. there are degrees of quality in learner products or performance.

c. knowing and applying criteria for determining quality is part of the learning task.

d. implementing accurate judgments of quality is important.

2. Examples of appropriate situations include:

a. precision in the use of language

b. dealing with social or economic issues

c. where the learner must generate and/or choose among alternatives.

B. Teaching Practices

1. Ask the learner to identify the strengths of own product. (Limit this set of statements by the learner to positive statements.) (Eliminate false modesty)

2. Agree with the learner's assessment where you can. Both the:

   a. decisions
   b. perceptivity

3. Use questions to focus attention on strengths the learner has overlooked.

4. Supplement the learner's assessment if you judge further positive comments:

   a. are deserved
   b. will stimulate growth in discrimination
   c. will develop needed confidence

5. Ask the learner to identify areas that could be strengthened.

6. Compliment the learner's skill at identifying areas needing strengthening.

7. Agree with the learner's assessment where you can.

8. Supplement the learner's assessment if you judge:

   a. further negative comments will stimulate growth and discrimination.
   b. if the student's level of confidence will respond positively to further criticism at this time.

9. Decide if the project being examined is worth further effort.

   a. at times most of what can be learned from a project has already been learned.
   b. sometimes the learning situation is passed and there are no opportunities to modify it.
   c. modify the present project or move on to the next task.

10. Either alone as teacher, cooperatively with the learner, or with the learner acting independently, design a subsequent project that will build on what has been learned.

11. With the learner:

    a. criticize the design of the next project.
    b. make needed changes.
    c. express confidence in the learner's ability to perform with increased skill in the subsequent project.

12. Help learner to:

    a. make accurate judgments of self.
    b. trust own judgments
    c. seek and respect competent criticism